

D'où Venons Nous? Que Sommes Nous? Où Allons Nous?*

It is both exhilarating and intimidating to assume the editorship of the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* (*JID*). Among 54 dermatology journals, it ranks first in the *Journal Citation Reports*. As the official publication of both the Society for Investigative Dermatology (SID) since its inception and the European Society for Dermatologic Research (ESDR) since 1976, the *JID* is the glue that binds together these two major research communities. In the past decade, under the leadership of its two prior editors—Lowell Goldsmith (2002–2007) and Paul Bergstresser (2007–2012)—the *JID*'s impact factor has risen from 3.75 to 6.27, placing it in the tier of top-ranked specialty journals. Where can we go from here? To answer this question, it behooves the *Journal* to consider two ongoing societal revolutions and a critical issue facing medicine in the twenty-first century.

Revolution 1: globalization

When the *JID* and SID were born in Atlantic City, NJ, 75 years ago, the American dermatologic research community was much smaller than it is today. It was also much more parochial. Few investigators in the United States, with the exception of those driven from Europe by the Nazi policies that presaged World War II, had ever traveled abroad or were familiar with European research or researchers. Asia was a complete unknown to Western researchers. Today there are three vibrant dermatologic research societies (SID, ESDR, and the Japanese SID or JSID), plus the JSID–Asia–Oceania Forum that additionally encompasses Korean, Chinese, and other South East Asian investigators. The annual meetings of each society bring together investigators and trainees from each catchment area with a large admixture of members from the others. The International Investigative Dermatology (IID) meeting that takes place

every five years replaces in that year the annual meetings of the SID, ESDR, and JSID and draws a majority of the members of each society; an estimated 1,600–1,700 researchers and their trainees are expected to attend the upcoming meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, 8–11 May 2013. This merged research community is reflected in the new *JID* Editorial Board, which boasts an impressive worldwide cross-section of expertise and academic leadership, continuing the practice established under previous editors. Cross-national postdoctoral training and research collaborations further bind these communities, as do multiple society-sponsored travel awards for trainees, ensuring that the benefit of international exposure is experienced early in their research careers and shapes their professional worldview. The contents of the *JID* reflect the shared technical and intellectual approaches of investigators everywhere, who vet and learn from one another's publications, independent of their countries of residence. The *JID*, the research communities, and, ultimately, the patients we serve should rejoice in

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR



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For a video message from Dr. Gilchrest, scan the adjacent tag with your smartphone or view the Supplementary Material online.

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this achievement. As globalization proceeds in all facets of human endeavor, the *JID* must strive to remain at the forefront of this critical and unstoppable movement.

Revolution 2: means of communication

Globalization is intimately related to the revolution in communications and information transfer. In the *JID*'s lifetime, telephones, television, and, most recently and importantly, the Internet have matured and permeated the globe. They now shape all human experience in myriad ways. To restrict our consideration to the *JID*, during Conrad Hauser's editorship (1997–2002) the *Journal* began to go online. Days, weeks, and dollars previously consumed by mailing manuscripts, reviews, author responses, and editorial decisions were replaced with website and e-mail transactions. Since 2002, supplementary online material, including videos, has increasingly been an option for authors and a means of amplifying journal content for readers without compromising the impact factor or crowding out other high-quality papers, given the reality of limited print pages. At present, approximately two-thirds of *JID* articles have online supplementary materials. With much of the content of each issue now available online 2 months before the print version is mailed to subscribers, and with several features available at no charge to nonsubscribers as well, Web traffic to the *JID* homepage has grown rapidly to more than 3.5 million page views and more than 1.5 million visitors in 2011. Immediate and free online access to the *JID* archive, back to the very first issue in 1938, is available on users' desktops or laptops anywhere, at any time. Indeed, online journals are widely expected to largely—perhaps even completely—replace hard copies within the next decade.

One could easily conclude that the king—the print version of the *JID* and so many other journals—has been dethroned. But is the revolution over? To the dismay of many senior scientists and academicians today, the answer is a resounding *no!* It has just begun.

The degree of instant interconnectedness provided by current social media was unimaginable even 10 years ago. People around the world casually speak with and send text messages to one another; exchange images; access books, newspapers, games, and movies; follow blogs; and participate in discussion forums via the Internet. Cost is modest to users, and usership extends across all ages and socioeconomic groups.

Until very recently, traditional learned societies regarded their journals as a means for an elite fellowship to communicate their wisdom unidirectionally to an only slightly larger group of similarly oriented professionals at a rather sedate pace. Pushed by their trainees (and perhaps their children), the editors of today's medical and scientific journals—including, and perhaps especially, the most competitive and prestigious ones—are experimenting with social media platforms. For example, many journals, such as *Nature*, maintain a Facebook page (<http://facebook.com/nature>) and Twitter feed (<http://twitter.com/#!/naturenews>). The vision is a scientific community in which “learners” (those attempting to master the most personally relevant of the new knowledge constantly spewing forth from the fire hose of our research enterprise) can access journal articles wherever they are, whenever



***JID*: global and online.** The Editor is located in Boston, Massachusetts; the editorial staff is in Chapel Hill, North Carolina; the Editorial Board is worldwide.

their schedules permit, having first identified via customized e-alerts the articles of highest priority for their own work. Of equal importance, the vision entails multidirectional communications, a community in which many readers rather than a handful of reviewers and editors can pose questions and raise counterpoints to authors, to the benefit (one hopes) of these authors and other readers. Such communication can potentially engender online venues in which researchers can exchange ideas and spark collaborations, replacing in part—but, God willing, never completely—late-night hotel barroom get-togethers at major society meetings.

The *JID* intends to adopt many of these platforms over the coming five years, with the most welcome support of Nature Publishing Group (NPG) and—we hope—the recommendations and feedback of our readers. John McGrath of King's College London, experienced Deputy Editor under Paul Bergstresser, will serve as inaugural Editor of a venture we are calling the *JID Connector*, making *JID* content more readily available and more interactive over the coming years. For a message from Dr. McGrath, please see the Supplementary Note online. Volunteers to assist in this effort will be critical to its success! Expressions of interest are welcomed (a form is available at <http://adobe.ly/z3Cmwr>). As well, raconteur and former Editor Lowell A. Goldsmith, MD, will lead a blog, “*JID* Jottings”, which will use *JID* original articles as a jumping-off point to discuss issues of importance and/or controversy for the scientific community. His first post is already available at <http://blogs.nature.com>.

The critical issue: who needs to understand medical science?

The pace of basic science discovery relevant to the pathophysiology and treatment of disease, certainly including skin disease, is awe-inspiring. For many physicians it is apparently overwhelming. Not only is the rate of publication for new original basic science reports relevant to any specific medical discipline staggering, but the technical approaches and specialized vocabulary evolve so rapidly that it is difficult to impossible for many otherwise well-educated physicians to comprehend these articles. This is true even of very recent

medical school graduates, who are likely to be far closer to “basic science” than those who have been in practice for several years. Dermatology, a subspecialty that attracts many of the most accomplished and high-performing graduates, is no exception. Very few dermatology residents subscribe to the *JID*, and many US residency programs have abandoned any pretense of regularly reviewing the *Journal* as part of the basic science curriculum mandated by the American Board of Dermatology. Given the enormous body of clinical knowledge trainees are expected to master as caregivers, this is surely understandable. But, equally, it is unfortunate.

Medicine has a proud tradition of combining art and science to prevent and treat disease, thereby reducing human suffering. The art of healing has changed little over the centuries, but scientific discoveries have altered the practice of medicine almost beyond recognition. In our specialty, how well must a dermatologist understand molecular biology and skin optics to provide optimal care to patients? To help basic scientists address unmet needs in clinical medicine? To avoid becoming technicians rather than physicians?

Scientific advances underlie essentially all treatment innovations, from targeted therapies for melanoma and nonmelanoma skin cancers to nonscarring laser therapy for tattoos and vascular birthmarks. In the twenty-first century, dermatologists must retain their scientific literacy in order to argue for and to employ today's treatments intelligently and to contribute to the development of new ones.

The *JID* is pleased to have been given the opportunity to address this critical issue with NPCG's encouragement and the support of the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). Through its PICMED (Program for Innovative Continuing Medical Education in Dermatology) grants, which fund innovative medical education projects, the AAD will jump-start an initiative to assemble small teams of dermatology residents, clinician-educators, and investigative dermatologists. These teams will select widely used laboratory techniques, likely unfamiliar to most clinically oriented dermatologists, and prepare short articles that explain the assays in very basic terms and then describe their usefulness as well as their limitations in the context of recent articles in the *JID* and similar journals. These brief articles will be published online each month, and they will be freely available to all readers. During a pilot run of 10 articles, we will assess the project's reception by our target audience. We will then continue, modify, or abandon the effort in favor of a different approach to increasing scientific literacy in the larger dermatology community. Many volunteers have already agreed to assist in this project, but more are welcome. Indicate your interest by signing up online (<http://adobe.ly/z3Cmwr>). For practical reasons, teams will initially be drawn from US dermatology departments, but expansion to encompass participants from Europe, Asia, and beyond is intended.

To complement this pilot project, going forward the *JID* will continue to expand its well-received “front-half” features, including Perspectives, Clinical Snippets, Editor's Picks, Commentaries, and Editorials. Many, although not all, will concern clinical studies and translational medicine articles in the accompanying *JID* issue. All, however, will attempt to provide concise descriptions of the clinical relevance of

the selected topic or article. Depending on one's perspective, this material may be viewed as an Executive Summary or as “Dermatologic Science for Dummies.” The *JID* will also continue to publish high-quality human-subject research and will actively solicit such articles from the community. We will reinforce this outreach to an expanded, clinically oriented readership through monthly e-alerts linked to the articles themselves (sign up for *JID*'s e-alerts under “Journal Services” at <http://jidonline.org>). In an iterative fashion, relying on feedback from resident users as well as from its traditional readership, the *JID* envisions a gradual expansion of appealing online features, many of which will constitute the *JID Connector* described above. It is hoped that many on the new Editorial Board will participate, but it is especially hoped that many whose professional emphasis lies outside the laboratory will also help ensure that important scientific advances in dermatology will truly be integrated into the knowledge base of all dermatologists.

Conclusions

We live and work in a world of unprecedented connectedness and scientific opportunity. Advances in understanding healthy and diseased skin in the 75 years since the *JID*'s debut have converted dermatology from a descriptive specialty with empiric and largely ineffective therapies to one in which many disorders are completely explained at the molecular level; some of these can now be treated or even cured by correcting the molecular abnormality. The *Journal*'s first and foremost responsibility must remain publication of rigorous laboratory-based studies that provide new insights into the biology and physiology of normal and diseased skin. This is the task to which the entire Editorial Board has committed itself.

Still, the pace of discovery and the growth of the discipline itself have overwhelmed many who are deeply invested in continued progress. Our very success threatens to isolate those best able to identify unmet patient needs from those best able to pursue root causes and enable effective therapies. We must harness the awesome power of today's information technology to pull these disparate communities back together, to sort and condense the flood of relevant new knowledge. We must learn to function optimally in our global, multifaceted community. The *JID* in the next five years aspires to facilitate these critical goals while maintaining—even enhancing—the excellent quality of its published science and its review process for submitting authors.

I welcome your participation in the *Journal*'s future.

Barbara A. Gilchrist

Editor

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Supplementary material is linked to the online version of the paper at <http://www.nature.com/jid>

*From the title of Paul Gauguin's 1897 painting of a culture that was simultaneously familiar and foreign to him. It translates as “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?”